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ABSTRACT

This report describes a program for improving reading skills. The targeted population consisted of first and second grade students from urban and rural communities in Northern Illinois. The problem of underachievement in reading was documented by reading inventories, writing samples, and writing prompts. Analysis of probable cause data revealed that: children's cultural backgrounds may influence the acquisition of reading skills; writing was a low priority in the classroom; there is a lack of parental involvement; and there is a lack of motivation to read well. These causes were documented by citations from professional literature and analysis. A review of solution strategies suggested by knowledgeable others, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the selection of strategies to improve students' reading through increased emphasis on writing activities. Post intervention data indicated a marked improvement in reading ability and word retrieval; and an increased interest in reading and writing. (Contains 26 appendixes of research data, 6 tables, and 37 references.) (Author/TB)

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IMPROVING READING THROUGH WRITING

by

*Linda Barackman
Linda Brown
Susan Drilling
Betty Morgan

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degree of Master's of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

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*Teachers
Caledonia Elementary
Caledonia, Illinois
Maud E. Johnson Elementary
Rockford Elementary
Rockford, Illinois

CS012365

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This project was approved by

Advisor

Advisor

Dean, School of Education

Abstract

Authors: Linda Barackman
Linda Brown
Susan Drilling
Betty Morgan

Site: Rockford IV

Date: December, 1995

Title: Improving Reading Through Writing

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A review of solution strategies suggested by knowledgeable others, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the selection of strategies to improve students' reading through increased emphasis on writing activities.

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Chapter 1

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM AND DESCRIPTION OF CONTEXT

General Statement of Problem

First and second grade students at the targeted elementary schools in grades one and two demonstrate underachievement in reading skills as evidenced by teacher records, teacher observations, and interviews.

Immediate Problem Setting

There are three schools involved. Each setting will be described as targeted elementary school A, targeted elementary school B, and targeted elementary school C.

The targeted school A is a Kindergarten through sixth grade school located in the northeast quadrant of a city in northern Illinois. The school was built in 1954 and at the present time is in good to fair condition.

The enrollment of 447 students in school A consists of 78.5 percent White, 14.8 percent Black, 4 percent Hispanic, 1.3 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1.3 percent Native American. All classes are currently integrated as mandated by a federal court order filed in 1989, and will continue to meet the plus or minus 15 percent integration guidelines (School Report Card, 1992-1993).

Fifteen percent of school A students qualify as low income because they come from homes that receive public funds or are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. The percentage of students attending school every day is 95.3, as compared to 92.5 percent for all schools in the district. The chronic truancy rate is one and four-tenths percent as compared to eight and six-tenths percent for all schools in the district. The number of chronic truants is six. School A has a student mobility rate of 12.7 percent, compared to 22.14 percent for all schools in the district (School Report Card, 1992-1993).

The student population comes from the surrounding neighborhoods and from students who are voluntarily bussed to the school from other areas. Of 447 children attending school A, 206 are bussed to school. The school is in a middle to lower socioeconomic area.

School A teachers follow the district curriculum guidelines. The reading program consists of the use of basal readers and supplemental trade books. Special programs to enhance academics are as follows: Great Books (classics read and discussed in classrooms), All School Fair (students share their reports and projects), and Picture Lady (program to discuss great works of art). The following organizations and activities are provided for children to participate in throughout the year: Caring Council, Peer Tutoring, Daisies, Brownies, Girl Scouts, Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, YMCA School Age Center, Grief Counseling, Safety Patrol, and classroom monitors.

The staff at school A consists of a principal, a head-teacher, 18 classroom teachers (including two teachers in Mentally Impaired/Self-Contained settings), Learning Disability and Behavior Disorder (LD/BD resource) teachers, specialists in music, art, and physical education, a Chapter I aide, 7 special education aides, a building engineer, a secretary, a night

custodian, and several lunch and playground aides. The administration and teaching staff are 95 percent majority and five percent minority. The years of teaching experience range from four years to thirty-two years. The average number of years of teaching experience is 21.4 years. Seventy percent of the teaching staff have a Master's degree or beyond, 13 percent are presently enrolled in a Master's program and 17 percent have a Bachelor's degree. The average class size for this school is 26 students. The average class size for grade two is 25. School A has a Special Services Team which consists of a principal, nurse, speech clinician, school psychologist, social worker, and LD/BD resource teachers. The team meets weekly to discuss team consultations, case studies, or to re-evaluate case studies. The school has an Instructional Support Team which consists of a home school counselor, parent liaison, and an implementor, whose goal is to raise the achievement scores of students who are in the lowest quartile.

School A has a very active Parent Teacher Organization, which meets on the first Tuesday of each month. In the past, the P.T.O. has purchased a copy machine, ditto machines, overheads, projectors, televisions, VCR's, and has also provided funds for maintenance and operating costs for these machines. The P.T.O. has paid for field trips and, in the past year, hired two groups of entertainers to perform for the children. To encourage parents to get acquainted with the staff and school setting, an ice cream social is held in the fall. An annual event is "Muffins For Mom" and "Donuts For Dad". The P.T.O. has also purchased a popcorn machine and holds a popcorn day once a month.

The education of all students within the district will be affected in various ways due to the federal lawsuit filed in 1989. The outcome of the lawsuit is intended to alleviate what the

court found to be intentional racial discrimination in class assignments, appointment of district leadership, bussing practices, and use of facilities. A court appointed Master will remain in charge of the various desegregation programs that were mandated by the lawsuit. One result of this court action was a 13 percent increase in property taxes to cover the costs of remedies put in place for the 1994 school year. The district may also suffer from further erosion of power as a result of increased dependence on court ordered remedies. Schools with mostly minority students will continue to receive more money for improvements. The building of a second west-side high school may also be required. Taxpayers will also be paying for all attorney fees, which currently total in the millions of dollars. The implementation of the court decision will probably continue for ten or more years.

The targeted school B is a Kindergarten through sixth grade facility located in a small town in northern Illinois. The school was built 20 years ago and is currently being enlarged, which will double the size of the enrollment.

There are a total of 409 students enrolled in targeted school B. The student population consists of 97.6 percent Caucasian, one and seven-tenths percent Hispanic, and five-tenths percent Asian/Pacific Islander. Data concerning family socio-economic status indicate that four and two-tenths percent of this school's student population is in a low income bracket. These children qualify for free or reduced price lunches. Targeted school B has an attendance rate of 95.9 percent, as compared to 94.4 percent within the district. There are no chronic truancy problems, as compared to three and eight-tenths percent for all schools in the district. School B has a student mobility rate of seven and nine-tenths percent (School Report Card 1993).

The majority of the students are bussed from surrounding subdivisions which are considered middle to high socioeconomic areas. The students in Kindergarten through sixth grade are in self-contained classrooms. The school offers a curriculum in which the students are heterogeneously grouped. Time devoted to teaching the core subjects is as follows: Reading/Language arts, first through third grade, 170 minutes per day, and fourth through sixth grade, 130 minutes per day. Math, first through third grade, 40 minutes per day, and fourth through sixth grade, 45 minutes per day. Science and Social Studies, first through third grade, 20 minutes per day, and fourth through sixth grade, 40 minutes per day (School Report Card, 1993). The reading program consists of basal readers with supplemental trade books. Students in first through sixth grade attend physical education classes daily and receive music instruction twice each week. Third through sixth grade students receive art education once per week. There are a variety of special education programs, for children in Kindergarten through sixth grade, with special needs. These programs consist of a learning disabilities resource room, speech therapy, reading improvement, and gifted education (School Report Card 1993).

Targeted school B is administered by one principal with a support staff of one secretary, 16 classroom teachers, one learning disabilities resource teacher, specialists in art, music, physical education, a reading improvement specialist, a speech and language specialist, one building custodian, several lunch and playground aides, two part-time nurses, two librarians, and a part-time library clerk. The administrative, teaching and support staff are 100 percent Caucasian. The years of teaching experience range from one year to 29 years. The average

number of years of experience is 13.5. Forty-seven and eight-tenths percent of the teaching staff have a Master's degree or beyond, 13.1 percent are presently enrolled in a Master's program, and 39.1 percent have a only a Bachelor degree. The average class size for this school is 26. The average class size for grade one is 23.

School B has a very active Parent Teacher Organization which meets the first Wednesday of each month. In the past, the P.T.O. has purchased a laminating machine, overhead projectors, VCR's, and built a $35,000 playground. That group is now involved in a $70,000 fund drive to furnish a new computer lab. To encourage parent participation, there is an all-school picnic, a Christmas program and a fun fair. There is a monthly treat day.

The targeted population of School C is housed in a Kindergarten through sixth grade elementary magnet school with a total enrollment of 359. The targeted class is a Gifted first grade class.

The school was built in 1972 on the site previously occupied by another school. The present school is a two-story building. The original school design had no permanent walls and no doors on the classrooms. Now, movable walls separate the classrooms on three sides, with a large opening into the hallway. The upstairs rooms form a square around a learning center. The open plan promotes use of all spaces, including hallways.

The magnet school houses two different programs, the community Academy (formerly called neighborhood children), and the Gifted Academy. The Gifted Academy was placed in the school to foster integration of the west-side schools. Currently, all students in the Gifted first grades are bussed to the school.

The school houses one class each of Kindergarten through sixth Community Academy

grades, and three classes of Gifted first, second, and third grades.

The student population consists of 49.9 percent Caucasian, seven and two-tenths percent Hispanic, 36.8 percent Black, and three and nine-tenths percent Asian. The attendance rate is 95.6 percent with a student mobility rate of 18.2 percent. The number of students identified from low income homes is 42.9 percent of the school's population (School Report Card, 1992).

The staff includes a principal, a secretary, an assistant secretary, a part-time nurse, a librarian and aide, a computer specialist, a Gifted specialist, a Learning Disability resource teacher, a Success For All (SFA) implementor, a SFA tutor, a reading specialist, a psychologist, a home school counselor, a student support specialist, a parent liaison, 17 classroom teachers, a full-time physical education specialist, and a part-time art and music specialist. Of the classroom teachers, 36 percent have their Master's degree. The principal holds a Doctorate degree.

The involvement and support of parents is evidenced in the amount of volunteerism within the school. This includes work in the classroom and learning center, reading to and tutoring students, bringing enrichment assemblies to the school, and providing financial support for items to benefit the school.

Description of Surrounding Community

Targeted school A and C are located in the same community, and targeted school B is located in a different community. Each community will be discussed separately.

Community A is situated along the Rock River in north-central Illinois. It is the second

largest city in Illinois with a population of approximately 140,000 people. The community covers a 50 square mile area within the 803 square mile metro area (Winnebago and Boone counties).

Community A has undergone some ethnic changes from 1980 to 1990. The Black, Hispanic and Asian populations have increased while the Caucasian population has decreased. The numerical summary of these changes is shown in the following table.

Ethnic Population Change 1980 - 1990

Race	1980	1990	+/- Change
Caucasian	84.3%	79.9%	- 4.4
Black	13.2%	14.8%	1.6
Hispanic	2.9%	4.2%	1.3
Asian	.5%	1.5%	1.0

The median household income of Community A is $28,282. The manufacturing sector employs 30 percent of the total population in the community. Service jobs employ 26 percent and retail trade employs 17 percent of the remaining workforce (Rockford Area Council of 100, 1993).

Community A has a wide range of educational levels among the adult population. Twenty percent have not completed high school, 32 percent are high school graduates, and 48 percent have had higher education (Rockford Register Star, 1994).

Community A school district population for the school year 1992-1993 was 27,314

students. These numbers included 66.4 percent Caucasian, 23.7 percent Black, six percent Hispanic, two and six-tenths percent Asian/Pacific Islander, and three one-hundredths percent Native American. The community allocates $5,395 per pupil. The district includes four high schools, four middle schools, 40 elementary schools, two special education facilities, and two early education centers (School Report Card, 1992-1993).

Community school district A has recently undergone changes in its administrative personnel. A greatly increased staff now consists of a superintendent, two associate superintendents, one assistant superintendent, and one in-house attorney. There are 11 general directors. The school board is composed of seven members elected from geographic areas.

Community B consists of one city and the majority of one county with a combined population of 30,806. The racial composition of community B is 95 percent Caucasian, six-tenths percent Black, and four and four-tenths percent "other." Persons of Hispanic origins comprise six and four-tenths percent (Growth Dimensions, 1993).

The community has experienced considerable residential growth in the last decade. Forty-five percent of migration into the community came from a very large metropolitan city and its suburban communities, 21 percent from communities within the state, 16 percent from other states, and 15 percent from an urban community within 15 miles (Growth Dimensions, 1993).

Community B has a wide range of educational levels among the adult population. Twenty four and five-tenths percent have not completed high school, 40.1 percent are high school graduates, and 35.3 percent have had higher education (Growth Dimensions, 1993). The median family income is $38,586. The manufacturing sector employs 59 percent of the total

population in the community, followed by retail trade at 16 percent, and service jobs at 13 percent. The unemployment rate for 1993 was nine and one-tenth percent (Growth Dimensions, 1993).

The district is a community unit district which consists of six elementary schools, one junior high school, one high school, one center for special education, and one central district office. The student population was 4,840 in 1993. The community allocates $3,727 in operating expenditures per pupil. The district is administered by an appointed superintendent of schools, an assistant superintendent of business, an assistant superintendent of curriculum, and a director of special education. The board of education is comprised of several members of the community and they are elected to four year terms.

Education beyond high school level is available to students from both community A and community B through the University of Illinois College of Medicine (extension courses) and that university's engineering studies program, Rock Valley Junior College, Saint Anthony College of Nursing, Rockford Business College, and an extension facility of Northern Illinois University scheduled to be opened in 1995.

Statement on National Context of Problem

Reading ability is a current topic of national concern to educators. There have been many articles and books written which attempt to increase the understanding of this important topic among these professionals. According to The Report of the Commission on Reading (1985), reading is a basic life skill. Without the ability to read well, chances for personal fulfillment and success will be reduced.

Our national education goals require competency in subject matters that can only be attained through a certain degree of reading competency (Foster, Siegel, and Landes, 1992). Illiteracy does run in families. Educators must stop this trend within the classroom. (Rosow, 1991). Large amounts of money are being spent on programs which fail children. Although educators have tried many interventions such as retention, remediation, and labelling, the level of success has not made a significant difference (McGill & Allington, 1991). The rising cost of these interventions and the lack of their success has clearly made the public unhappy with the present high levels of illiteracy.

Billions of education tax dollars have been spent, yet nine out of ten children who start first grade in the bottom reading group stay in that group throughout elementary school. That label alone predicts, with alarming accuracy, who will succeed and who will fail in life (McGill & Allington, 1991). When children cannot read well, they usually cannot succeed in other subject areas, and they will eventually have additional problems in society.

As these children grow into adulthood, they represent more than one-third of the entire adult population of the United States. Nationwide findings indicate they do not have skills to perform the most basic of tasks: balancing a checkbook, reading a newspaper, addressing a letter, and looking up a number in a telephone book (Kozel, 1985).

In 1989, three and one-half million nine-year-olds completed third and fourth grade in the country. Ninety-four percent were reading at "grade level", but 210,000 children could not read or understand their textbooks (Anrig & Lapointe, 1989). Intervention is rarely an option in the primary grades. Children typically have to fail standardized or state-mandated tests

somewhere near the end of second grade or third grade before they are given help with reading. When low-achieving children are finally eligible for help, it is often too little and too late (McGill & Allington, 1991).

Children stop believing in themselves when they are identified as failures. Therefore, a unified effort is needed so every child can and will be literate.

Chapter 2

PROBLEM EVIDENCE AND PROBABLE CAUSE

As stated in Chapter One the reading ability of students is a concern at the local, state, and national levels. Reading and writing can and should be one of the most fulfilling undertakings that children experience.

Reading and writing, like talking and listening, are inseparable processes. Reading is a developmental process beginning early in childhood and continuing throughout life, and therefore, goes hand in hand with writing (Holdaway, 1979 ; Learning Media, 1992).

Problem Evidence

In order to document the extent of underachievement in reading, three types of assessment were administered to first and second grade students in the targeted schools. These assessments were the Silvaroli Reading Survey, the Marie Clay Writing Spree, and writing prompts.

Table 1 illustrates the reading levels of first and second grade students as measured by the Silvaroli Reading Survey (Appendix B). The first grade program consists of three Reading levels: Pre-Primer, Primer and First Reader. The Pre-Primer level is a reinforcement of basic skills taught in Kindergarten. The Primer level expands the child's knowledge of sight word and phonetic vocabulary. The First Reader reinforces phonetic

and sight vocabulary and comprehension.

Upon completion of Kindergarten, students are expected to score at the Pre-Primer level or are classified as non-readers. When entering second grade, students must have mastered words at the Pre-Primer, Primer, and First Grade levels to be considered at grade level. The reading levels second through sixth correspond to the appropriate grade level.

Table 1
Silvaroli Reading Survey of First and Second Grade Reading Levels
Percentage of Students at Each Reading Level

Level	First Graders	Second Graders
Non Reader	48.8%	11.1%
Pre Primer	17.1%	17.8%
Primer	14.6%	8.9%
First	7.3%	17.8%
Second	4.9%	20.0%
Third	.0%	6.7%
Fourth	4.9%	6.7%
Fifth	.0%	4.4%
Sixth	2.4%	6.7%

The results of the Silvaroli Reading Survey indicated that 48.8 percent of the targeted first grade students were non-readers. Fifty-five and six tenths percent of the targeted second grade students were below expected reading level. Further analysis of the data showed that only 24.5 percent of the targeted second grade students were above reading level.

The students in the three targeted schools were given Marie Clay's Writing Spree (Appendix C). The writing spree is a test designed to assess a child's ability at word retrieval. The Writing Spree indicates the child's knowledge of letters and left to right sequencing skills required to read. Therefore, those students with low word retrieval skills may have difficulty reading.

Table 2

Marie Clay Writing Spree
Number of Students at Each Word Retrieval Level

Number of Words	First Graders	Second Graders
71 - 80	0	1
61 - 70	0	1
51 - 60	0	1
41 - 50	0	2
31 - 40	3	9
21 - 30	3	13
11 - 20	13	15
0 - 10	23	4

First graders are expected to retrieve a total of at least eleven words at the beginning of first grade. This number is based on the vocabulary mastered at Kindergarten level. Second grade students are expected to retrieve forty-four words at the beginning of second grade. This number is based on an increase of 11 words per quarter.

The data suggest that students in the targeted first and second grades have inadequate word retrieval skills. **Table 2** illustrates that 54.7 percent of the targeted first grade students were unable to retrieve from memory at least 11 words. **Table 2** also shows that 88.2 percent of the second grade students were unable to retrieve from memory 44 words.

The targeted first and second grade students were assigned a writing prompt (Appendix D). The prompts were scored by a rubric (Appendix E). A score of one for first and second graders indicates the child did not respond to the prompt or did so in a manner that inhibited reader's understanding. A score of two indicates the student responded to the prompt, and expressed complete thoughts. This score also indicates that the student is progressing at grade level. A score of three indicates a response to the prompt using complete sentences with appropriate punctuation and capitalization. **Table 3** documents the results of these prompts.

Table 3

Writing Prompt Scores of First and Second Grade

Score	First Graders	Second Graders
1	15	24
2	20	18
3	5	5

This table illustrates that more than one third of the first graders and one-half of the second graders scored below the scoring rubric of two. The table also infers that the majority of students are unable to respond appropriately to the writing prompt.

A review of the data gathered shows that students from the targeted schools are underachieving in reading. The data from **Tables 1, 2, and 3** indicate that students from the targeted schools perform below grade level on the Silvaroli Reading Survey, Marie Clay Writing Spree and the writing prompt.

Probable Cause

The literature suggests several underlying causes for underachievement in reading. Success in reading does not start when a child enters school. Reading depends upon a variety of experiences. The lack of parental involvement is one possible cause for poor reading skills. "The more knowledge children are able to acquire at home, the better their chance for success in reading" (Anderson, et. al., 1984). Children who have gone on vacations, walked in parks, and gone to zoos and museums will have more background knowledge relevant to reading than children who have not had these types of experiences. Unfortunately, not all children have the advantage of such a remarkable home environment.

Another reason for lack of reading success is the limited parent-child contact due to working parents. "The percentage of mothers of school age children holding full-time jobs increased enormously between 1950 and 1980" (Berliner and Casanova, 1993). With this need to have both parents employed, families lack time to interact with their children (U.S.

Department of Education, 1994).

A third probable cause is that many parents are unsure of how to help their children learn. These parents lack the motivation and skills needed to help their children in their schoolwork (U.S. Department of Education, 1994, and Berliner and Casanova, 1993).

Another cause relates to attendance in pre-school programs. According to Clay (1993), preschool is an essential step towards reading and writing success. Children who do not attend preschool programs may lack the readiness skills needed to achieve this success.

The amount of time spent viewing television has a direct effect on academic achievement. "Academic achievement drops sharply for children who watch more than ten hours a week or an average of two hours per day" (U.S. Department of Education, 1994, p.9). The average child spends more time watching videos, television and motion pictures by age six than he does conversing with his father in his lifetime (Medved, 1995).

Cultural background influences how and what we learn, and therefore is also a probable cause. Children who come from cultures that emphasize oral language rather than printed language come to school at a disadvantage compared to children who come from a print-rich environment (Clay, 1994).

The importance of a child's motivation and attitude towards reading cannot be understated. Children who lack self-confidence do not develop an interest in reading or writing. "Children who are perceived by self or others as poor readers have attitudes about reading that are less than favorable" (Layne, 1994). Studies have observed that the majority of children choose to read books only five and four-tenths percent of their leisure time (Morrow, 1991).

The amount of time children spend reading in the average classroom is minimal. An estimate of silent reading time in the typical primary class is seven or eight minutes per day, or less than ten percent of the total time devoted to reading. (Anderson et al. 1985). Oftentimes, teachers believe that seat work activities have very little effect on increasing a child's reading. Only nine percent of all of assignments require the student to understand two or more sentences in order to be able to answer a question (Berliner and Casanova. 1993)

In our schools it is not easy to learn to read and write if you are a child with severe disabilities. There is only a 30 percent chance of being as able as other children to read and write (Erickson and Koppenhaver. 1995). Literacy is a lower priority for these students due to the need to devote large amounts time and energy to their basic care needs (Light and Lelford Smith in Erickson and Koppenhaver. 1995).

The lack of attention to writing skills is one more reason for poor student ability in this area. A survey of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) found that writing is a low priority for teachers and students. Only 22 percent of teachers surveyed felt that writing was the most important skill for children to learn (Lewis. 1995).

A summary of probable causes for the problems regarding reading follows. This list was gathered from sites and from the literature referenced above.

1. Lack of parental involvement.
2. Working parents.
3. Lack of parenting skills to foster achievement.
4. Lack of Preschool.

5. Excessive television viewing
6. Cultural background and influences
7. Lack of student motivation to read
8. Lack of time spent in the classroom on reading
9. Children with severe disabilities
10. Low priority in time spent writing

Chapter 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGIES

Review of the Literature

"Early development of the knowledge needed for reading comes from experience talking and learning about the world and talking and learning about written language"(Anderson et al.,1985, p.21-22). Learning to read and write should be a normal developmental process of language acquisition for all children (McCracken and McCracken, 1986).

Children acquire specific knowledge about a written language before coming to school. If children come from homes where books, periodicals, and newspapers are available, they will value reading. American homes should be places where parents converse frequently with their children, listen to their responses, answer questions, and read aloud daily (Boyer, 1991). Parents can also be given a list of suggested materials, activities, and attitudes that promote a reading environment (Morrow, 1985).

Classroom tasks affect students' motivation for literacy. Research has shown that choice can be a powerful motivator. Children who have been given opportunities to choose reading materials that they find interesting, expend more effort learning and tend to understand the material (Turner and Paris, 1995).

Whole language is a philosophy which encompasses meaningful, relevant teaching and learning (Routman, 1988). Advocates of whole language believe that children do not learn by first mastering the smaller parts of the whole. Language should be kept whole and not separated into parts. Children should use language that will relate to their everyday lives and cultures (Gursky, 1991). "A differing opinion held by fundamentalist religious groups denounce whole language as secular humanism, atheism, and even Satanism because of its emphasis on real literature." (Gursky, 1991, p. 26).

There are a number of valid reasons for using literature as the core of a reading and writing program. Routman (1988) lists eight advantages of a literature based reading program.

1. Literature allows meaning to dominate.
2. Literature use concentrates on the development of readers rather than the development of skills.
3. Literature promotes language development.
4. Literature promotes positive self-concepts.
5. Literature promotes fluent reading.
6. Literature exposes students to a variety of story structures, themes, and authors' styles.
7. Literature puts children in contact with illustrations at its best.
8. Literature makes reading fun.

Thematic teaching brings authentic and meaningful reading activities to the classroom. Thematic units encourage students to pursue ideas more thoroughly so that they can develop deeper understanding. Teaching thematically makes it possible for instruction to be integrated meaningfully across reading, writing, math, history, science, and the arts (Schneider, Shanahan, and Robinson, 1995). According to the Vermont Writing Survey, teachers believe that writing is useful as a method of learning, and assists in the teaching of content areas (Poeton, 1992).

Joyce stated, "Research on cooperative learning is overwhelmingly positive and the cooperative approaches are appropriate for all curriculum areas" (quoted in Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991, p. 4). As a result of cooperative learning, students develop higher level thinking skills and learn to work together in a cooperative manner. In a primary cooperative learning classroom, small groups can read the same story, then take turns retelling the story to each other which promotes listening skills, increases vocabulary, and strengthens comprehension and questioning skills.

A valuable strategy for teaching is the use of graphic organizers. A graphic organizer is a visual image that may serve as an outline when students begin to write. Graphic organizers, such as Venn diagrams, KWL's, story maps, matrixes, webs, T-charts, P.M.I.'s and semantic mapping help build vocabulary, comprehension, and critical thinking skills in students (Farquhar and Young, 1991).

As writers write, they frequently read their text to establish how their work is developing. Young writers improve their reading skills through practice (Graves, 1985). When children read words they have just written, their reading skills are enhanced. These

skills, acquired and strengthened through writing, are transferred with relative ease to reading other materials (Avery, 1993). Students must be allowed opportunities to read their writing aloud. They need to see themselves as writers of reading and not as writers of writing (Caulkens, 1986).

Children need to be given opportunities to see and hear various forms of written language. Immersion in a print rich environment provides children with numerous examples of how written language is used in authentic and purposeful ways (Butler and Turbell, 1984).

Project Outcomes and Solution Components

As a result of increased instructional emphasis on writing during the period of September 1995 to December 1995, the first and second grade students from the targeted classes will increase their reading ability as measured by a published reading inventory, a writing spree, and a writing prompt.

In order to accomplish the terminal objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. Establish a series of writing activities that encourage students to be more self-confident readers.
2. Design a schedule that allows time to write, time to read their writings, and time to share their writings with others.

Action Plan for Intervention

Opportunities to write occur throughout the entire school day. The teacher will take advantage of appropriate writing opportunities arising from every area of the curriculum.

In order to improve reading, weekly writing lessons will be incorporated into the curriculum.

WEEK 1

Students will write an acrostic name poem. Students will also draw a self-portrait with a name frame. (Appendix G)

WEEK 2

Students will interview a classmate. They will record their information on a graphic organizer. First grade students will share orally the interview information from the graphic organizer. Second grade students will use their graphic organizer to write a narrative to share with the class. (Appendix H)

WEEK 3

Students will write a class ABC book. They will work with partners to create sentences using alliteration. Each student pair will have designated letters to work on. The pages will be illustrated. These ABC books will be shared. (Appendix I)

WEEK 4

Students will be introduced to the form of poetry called haiku. They will write individual haiku. They will illustrate them and share with the class. (Appendix J)

WEEK 5

Students will write an historical fiction story based on the life of Johnny Appleseed. Stories will be shared and put on display. (Appendix K)

WEEK 6

Students will write a definition poem using facts about Christopher Columbus. These will be put together to form a class book. The poems will be shared with other students. (Appendix L)

WEEK 7

Students will brainstorm a list of fire prevention and fire safety rules. They will write a list of rules that they feel are the most important and explain why they are important. These will be shared and displayed. (Appendix M)

WEEK 8

Students will write original recipes for a witch's stew. Final copies will be put on recipe cards and they will be shared and displayed. (Appendix N)

WEEK 9

Students will use descriptive words to write a Halloween story. These stories will be shared and displayed. (Appendix O)

WEEK 10

Students will write a friendly letter to grandparents asking them to remember when they were in first or second grade. The students will share their responses. (Appendix P)

WEEK 11

Students will fill out a sequential order graphic organizer. Using the information on the organizer, the cooperative buddies will write a narrative story on how to catch a turkey. (Appendix Q)

WEEK 12

Students will compare and contrast Pilgrim boys and Pilgrim girls using a Venn diagram graphic organizer. They will write diary entries, as a Pilgrim boy or a Pilgrim girl. (Appendix R)

WEEK 13.

Students will write a Thanksgiving dinner menu containing their favorite foods. These will be shared and displayed. (Appendix S)

Students will write in journals on a daily basis. A minimum of 15 minutes a day will be scheduled for this writing. Time will also be allotted for the sharing of journal entries. This fifteen minute journaling time period may be scheduled anytime during the course of the school day. The teacher will also take part in the journaling activity.

Children believe they have the ability to write and something to write about. They need to be allowed to choose their own topics. This choosing of their own writing topic gives the student a sense of ownership and value. Daily journals engage children in non-threatening, purposeful writing activities as they move toward independence in reading and writing. These journal writings then form the basis for the print children will learn to read.

Teacher response to journal writing is a necessary component. The teacher will respond personally concerning the message's content, and not to the mechanics, grammar, or spelling. In order to keep in touch with what the students are writing, the teacher will respond frequently.

Methods of Assessment

The data collection methods to be used to assess the effects of the interventions include a Classroom Reading Inventory by Nicholas J. Silvaroli, a Writing Spree by Marie Clay, and a writing prompt. Data will be collected in August and December.

Chapter 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of Intervention

The objective of the project was to increase the reading ability of first and second grade students. The implementation of a series of writing activities, including time to share the writings with others, was selected to effect the desired changes.

Daily journal writing was employed as a technique to improve reading. These self-generated writings were intended to improve the children's ability to read orally. Original plans called for a minimum of 15 minutes a day for journal writing. This period of time was found to be appropriate, but more time must be allotted for the sharing of journals. The plan also called for teacher/researchers to journal along with the students. This was not always possible due to unforeseen interruptions. Teacher/researchers responded to individual student's journals at least twice a week.

Planned writing activities were implemented weekly. The teacher directed portion of the intervention lasted 45 minutes. The students continued writing and editing throughout the week. Time was allowed for sharing of the writing upon completion.

The teacher/researchers found that opportunities for writing occurred across the curriculum. The planned writing activities were implemented in chronological order from August 28 to December 1.

There were thirteen planned weekly writing activities. A description of each weekly writing activity follows:

WEEK 1

The students wrote an acrostic name poem. Some students had difficulty with the concept of finding descriptive words that began with the letters that were in the student's name. This writing activity would be better implemented later in the year. Students drew a self portrait with a name frame.

WEEK 2.

The students interviewed a classmate using a graphic organizer. The second grade students wrote a narrative. The first and second grade students shared orally these interviews.

WEEK 3.

The students wrote ABC books with alliteration. Student pairs chose an alphabet letter to write an alliterative sentence. The sentence was then illustrated. The pages were bound into a class book. The activity required the teacher to read numerous alphabet books prior to this activity.

WEEK 4

The students were introduced to the form of poetry called haiku. The first grade students found haiku poetry too difficult due to their inability to understand syllabication. Second grade students were able to create an original haiku with minimal difficulty.

WEEK 5

The students wrote historical fiction about Johnny Appleseed. This writing project employed the T chart graphic organizer.

WEEK 6

The students wrote a definition poem about Christopher Columbus. The reading of several stories about Columbus' life was important to the success of this lesson as it helped give the students background information for the writing of the poems.

WEEK 7

The students brainstormed fire safety rules. Then the students wrote down five important rules for safety. A graphic organizer in the shape of a matchbook was used for the final copy. This form of display was more creative than the original poster idea.

WEEK 8

The students wrote recipes for witch's stew. After the teacher researcher read The

Witch's Supermarket by Susan Meddaugh, the students made a list of the ingredients that could be used in a witch's stew. From the list, original recipes were created.

WEEK 9.

The students wrote stories with a Halloween theme. A mock campfire was built to help create a fun atmosphere for the telling of the stories.

Week 10.

The students wrote friendly letters to a "special" older person. Learning the proper form for a friendly letter is part of the first and second grade language arts curriculum. The importance of being able to write a friendly letter was discussed. Prior to writing the letter the students practiced by writing a letter to a friend in the class.

Week 10.

The students used a sequential order graphic organizer to write "How To Catch A Turkey." The first and second grade students had previously worked on the skill of sequential order, so there was little difficulty in doing this activity. The importance of sequential order in everyday life was emphasized.

Week 12.

The students listened to the stories Sarah Morton, A Day In The Life Of A Pilgrim

Girl and Samuel Eaton, A Day In The Life Of A Pilgrim Boy. A Venn diagram comparing and contrasting the lives of the two Pilgrim children was completed as a large group activity. Afterward the students pretended they were either a Pilgrim boy or a Pilgrim girl and wrote a diary entry.

Week 13.

The students made a list of foods that were served at the Pilgrim's first Thanksgiving, and a list of traditional Thanksgiving foods served today. The students planned a menu of five items that they would choose to serve for a Thanksgiving meal.

At the end of the thirteenth week, the formal implementation phase of the intervention was concluded.

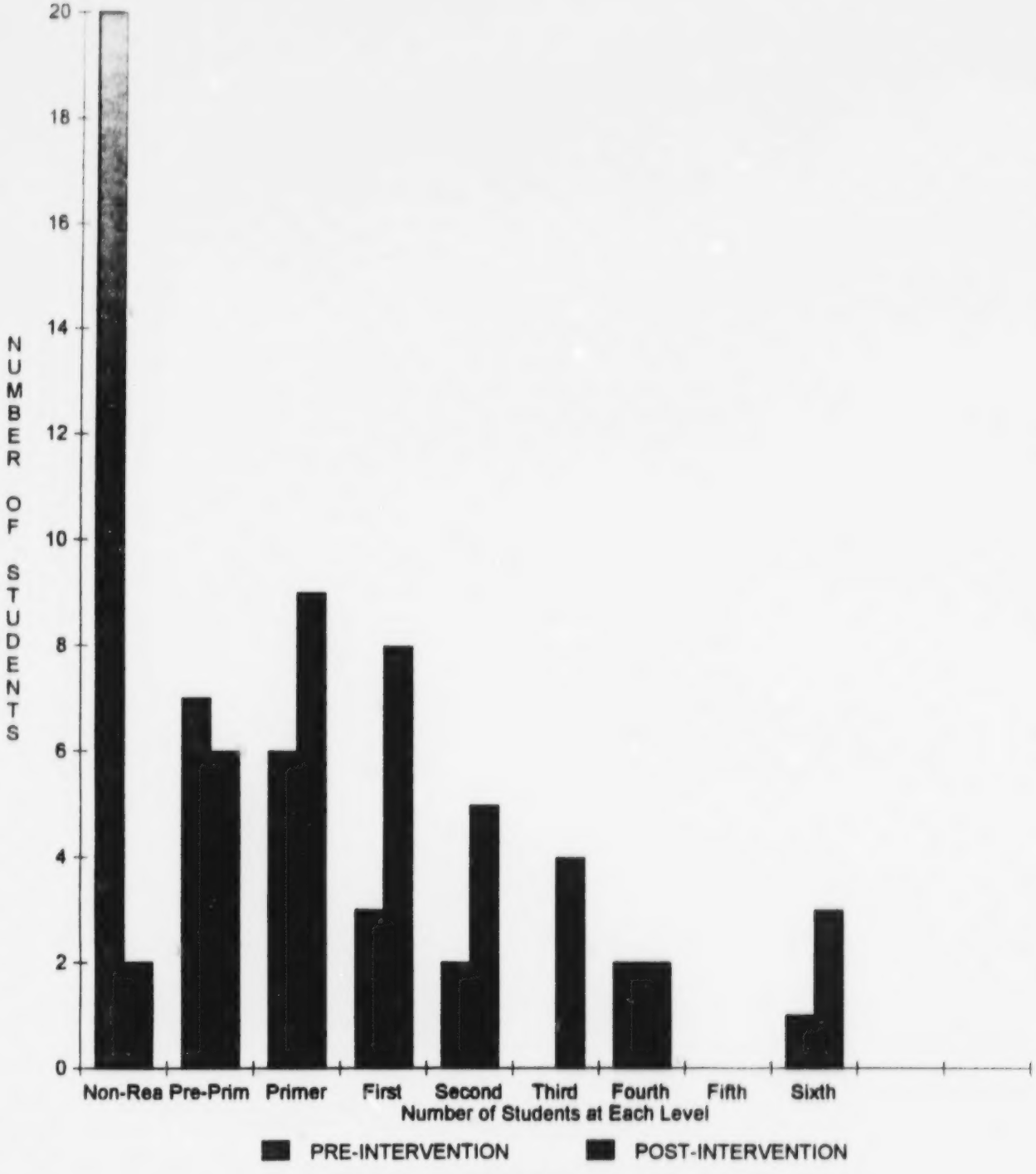
Presentation and Analysis Of Results

In order to assess the improvement of reading through writing, the Silvaroli Classroom Reading Inventory by Nicholas J. Silvaroli, a Writing Spree by Marie Clay, and a writing prompt were administered to first and second grade students in schools A, B, and C in August 1995 and December 1995. **Tables 4**, **5**, and **6** represent the data gathered from these tests.

Table 4
Silvaroli Classroom Reading Inventory of First and Second Grade Reading Levels
Pre and Post Test Results
Percentage of Students at Each Reading Level

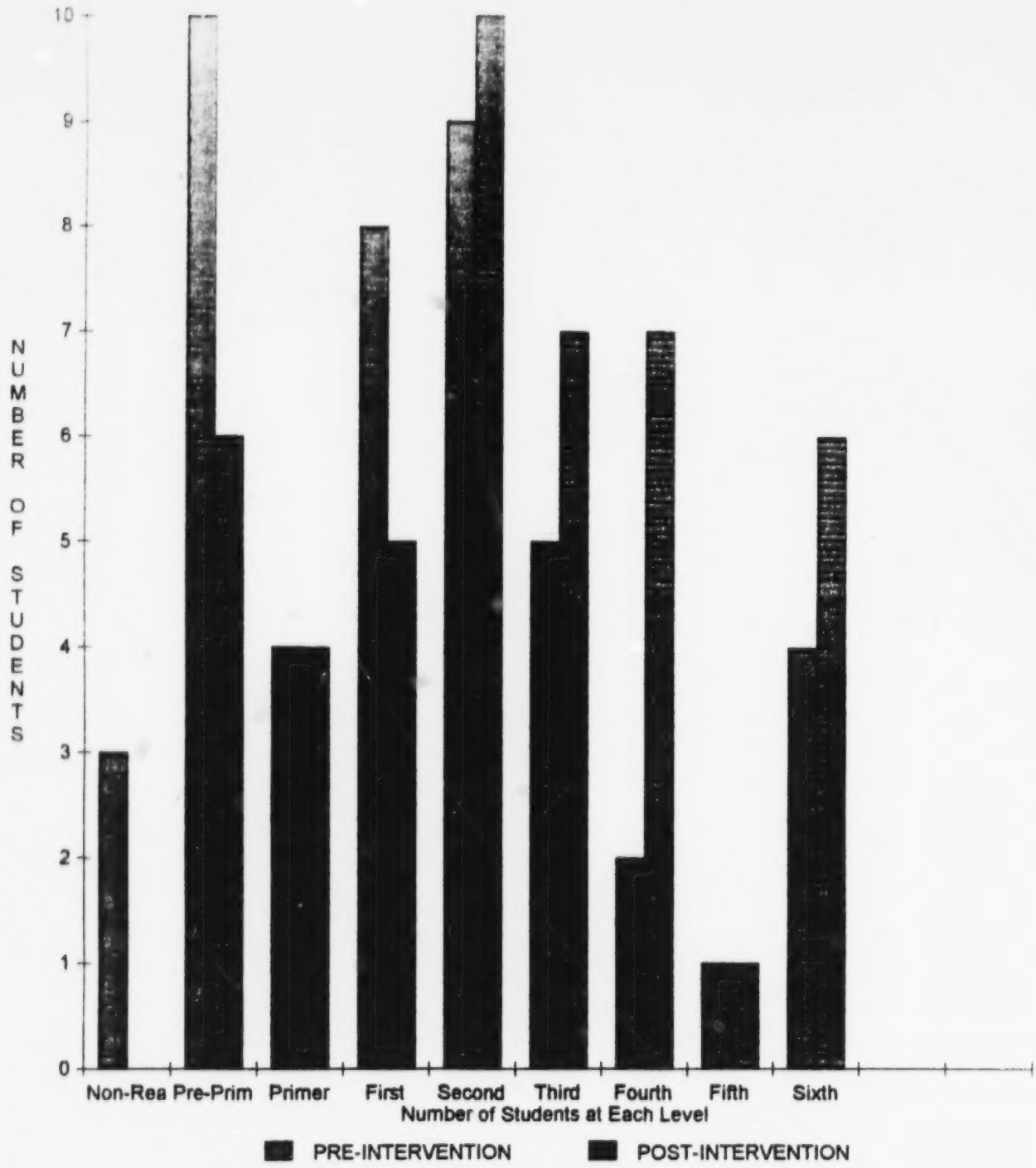
Level	First Graders		Second Graders	
	August 1995	December 1995	August 1995	December 1995
Non Reader	48.8%	5.1%	11.1%	0.0%
Pre Primer	17.1%	15.4%	17.8%	13.8%
Primer	14.6%	23.0%	8.9%	8.7%
First	7.3%	20.5%	17.8%	10.9%
Second	4.9%	12.8%	20.0%	21.7%
Third	0.0%	10.3%	6.7%	15.2%
Fourth	4.9%	5.1%	6.7%	15.2%
Fifth	0.0%	0.0%	4.4%	2.2%
Sixth	2.4%	7.7%	6.7%	13.0%

In the targeted first grades, the Silvaroli Reading Inventory indicated a change from 48.8 percent non-readers to five percent non-readers. The percentage of targeted second grade non-readers changed from 11 percent to zero percent. After the intervention, the percentage of targeted second grade students below grade level decreased from 55.6 percent to 32.6 percent. Further analysis of the data showed that 67.3 percent of the targeted second grade students were at or above second grade level after the intervention. This is an increase of 22.8 percent. Fifty-six and four-tenths percent of the targeted first grade students were at or above grade level. This was an increase of 22.3 percent after the intervention. These results are illustrated in **Figure 1** and **Figure 2**.



SILVAROLI CLASSROOM READING INVENTORY
FIRST GRADE

Figure 1



SILVAROLI CLASSROOM READING INVENTORY

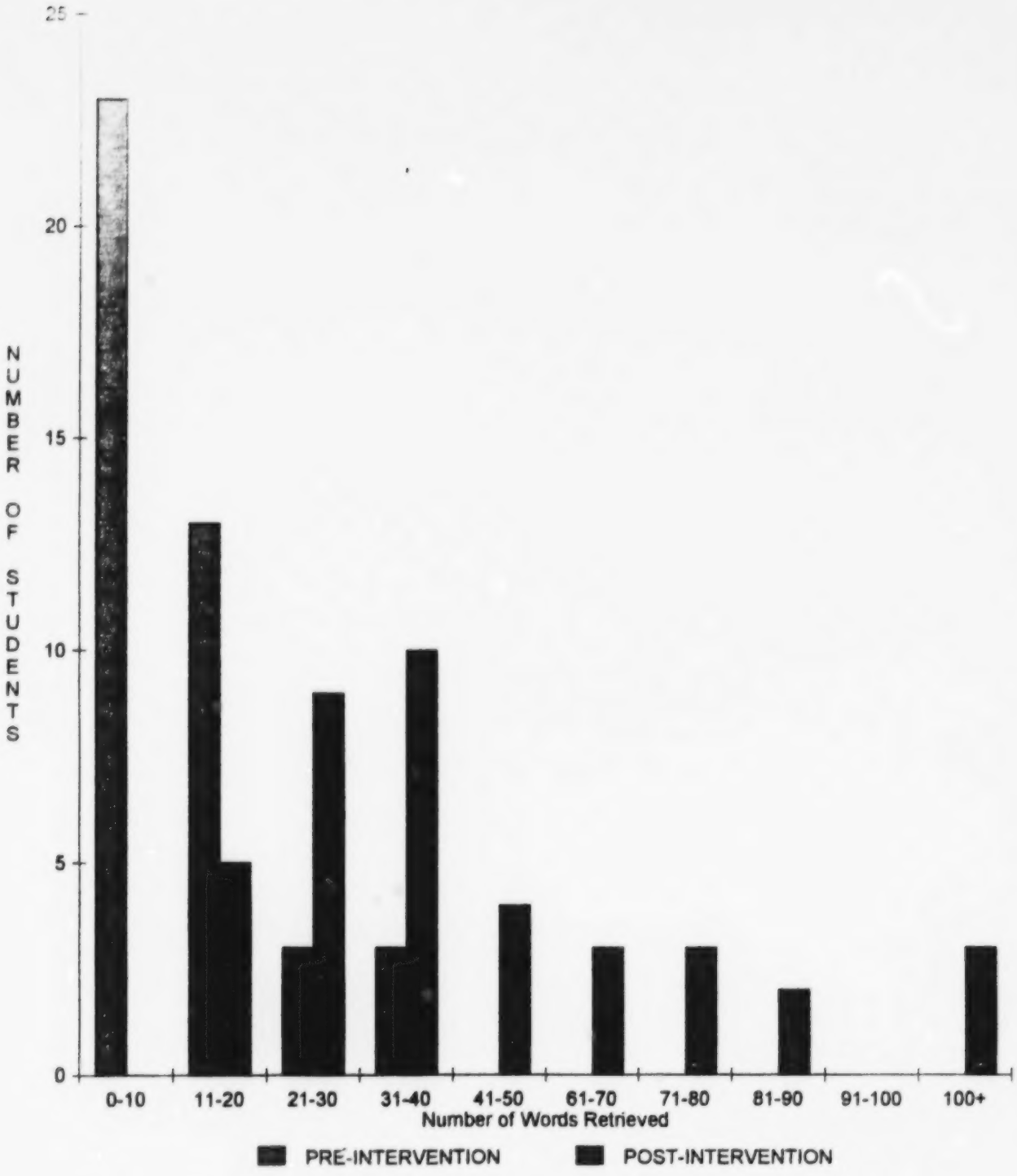
SECOND GRADE

Figure 2

Table 5
Marie Clay Writing Spree
Pre and Post Test Results
Number of Students at Each Word Retrieval Level

Number of Words	First Graders		Second Graders	
	Aug. 1995	Dec. 1995	Aug. 1995	Dec. 1995
100+	0	3	0	1
81-90	0	0	0	2
71-80	0	2	1	5
61-70	0	3	1	4
51-60	0	3	1	7
41-50	0	4	2	16
31-40	3	10	9	7
21-30	3	9	13	2
11-20	13	5	15	1
0-10	23	0	4	1

After the intervention, the teacher/researchers noted significant gains in the number of words retrieved in the first and second grades. **Table 5** indicates that 87 percent of the targeted first grade students were able to retrieve from memory at least 21 or more words. **Table 5** also indicates that 39 per cent of the targeted second grade students were able to retrieve from memory 51 words. These results indicate a significant increase in word retrieval skills at both the first and second grade levels. These results are illustrated in **Figure 3** and **Figure 4**.



FIRST GRADE WRITING SPREE

Figure 3

38

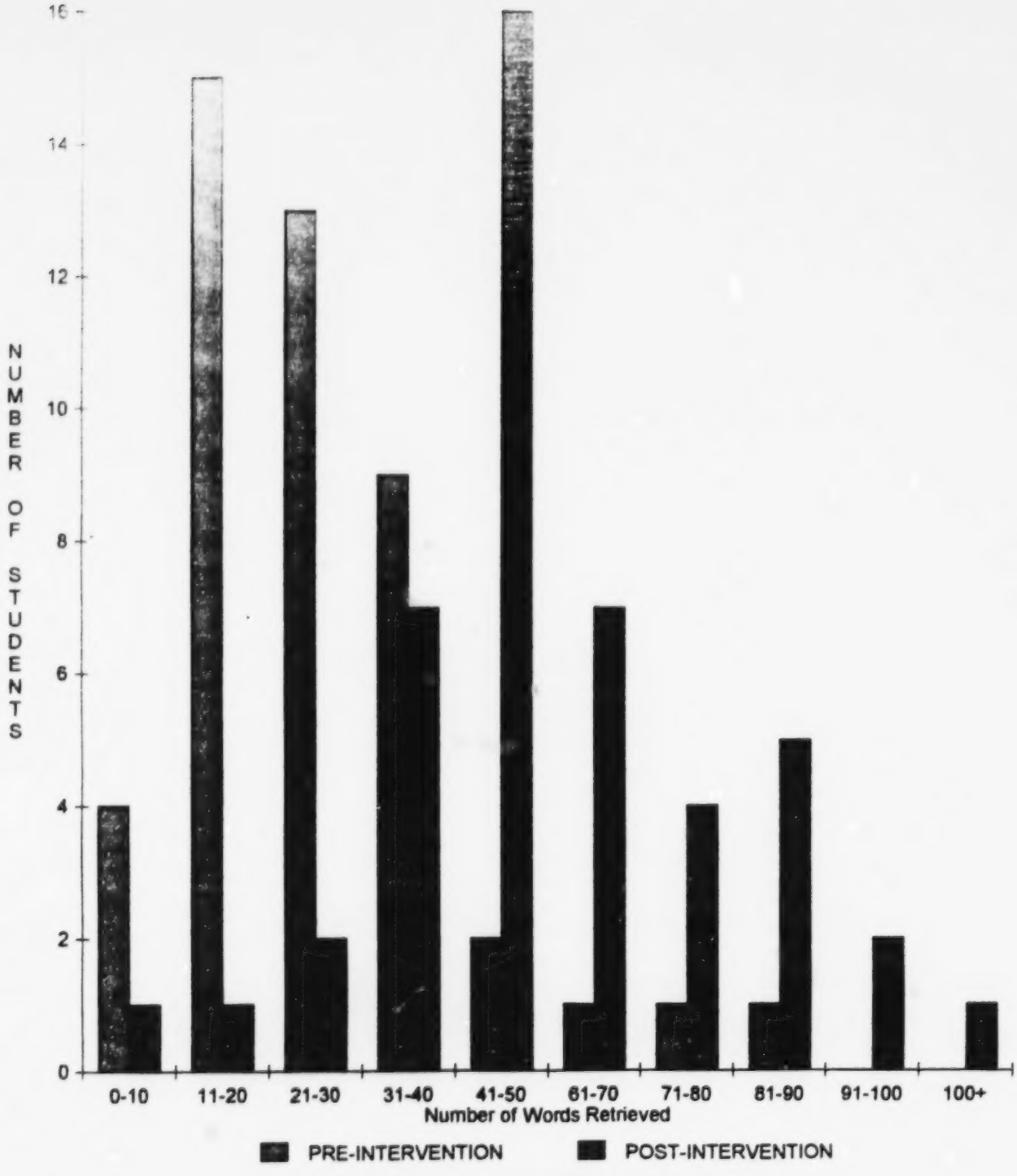

16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
NUMBER OF STUDENTS
0-10
11-20
21-30
31-40
41-50
61-70
71-80
81-90
91-100
100+
Number of Words Retrieved
PRE-INTERVENTION
POST-INTERVENTION
SECOND GRADE WRITING SPREE

Figure 4

39

Table 6
Writing Prompt Score of First and Second Graders

Score	First Graders		Second Graders	
	August 1995	December 1995	August 1995	December 1995
1	15	2	24	9
2	20	11	18	16
3	5	26	5	21

After the intervention, 94.9 percent of the first grade students and 80.4 percent of the second grade students scored at or above the scoring rubric of two, indicating satisfactory. Prior to the intervention, 33 percent of the first grade students and 50 percent of the second grade students scored below the satisfactory rubric. This table indicates that the intervention increased writing proficiency.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and the analysis of the data, the students showed a marked improvement in reading. Beginning in August 1995, the intervention was taught through daily journaling and weekly writing activities. Oral reading was improved by sharing daily journal entries. The writing skills utilized during journal writing improved the students' writing across the curriculum.

In addition to improving writing skills, the children developed the desire to read

and share what they had written. Prior to the research, teacher/researchers believed that students needed a journal topic in order to write in a daily journal. Throughout the intervention, teacher/researchers discovered that students could not only produce self-generated journal topics, but that they did so with ease and confidence.

The teacher/researchers used weekly writing lessons to provide opportunities that would encourage and improve writing skills. The frequent exposure to literature emphasized the reading and writing connection. Teacher/researchers concluded that the students' reading ability increased due to the reading of their **own** self-generated writings instead of grade level controlled vocabulary. The teacher/researchers noted that the children were more confident in their ability to read when reading from their own writing.

In comparing the first and second grade students from past years with the first and second grade students from the targeted schools, teacher observations indicated higher levels of self-confidence and self-esteem, increased amounts of reading and writing, and an increase in the number of students willing to write and read.

The teacher/researchers conclude that by following these interventions other students could develop and strengthen their reading ability through writing. The teacher/researchers recommend that these interventions, lesson plans, and assessment tools could be modified and implemented for students at all grade levels.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Parent Letter

Dear Parents,

This year your child will be participating in a research project that I am working on in conjunction with my Master's program through St. Xavier University. This Action-Research is focused on improving reading skills through writing.

Your participation is strictly voluntary. Student anonymity will be maintained in reporting the data. Student responses will be clustered to maintain student confidentiality. No child will be penalized in any manner for non-participation.

Feel free to contact me if you need clarification.

Sincerely,

Appendix B

Classroom Reading Inventory
Nicholas Silvaroli

Graded Word List Procedure

Present the graded word lists beginning with the Preprimer level, and say, "Pronounce each word. If you are not sure, or do not know the word, then say what you think it is." Discontinue at the level at which the student mispronounces or indicates he or she does not know five of the twenty words in a particular grade level. This will determine the student's word recognition level.

Graded Word List

PP		P		1		2	
1 for	_____	1 was	_____	1 many	_____	1 stood	_____
2 blue	_____	2 day	_____	2 painted	_____	2 climb	_____
3 car	_____	3 three	_____	3 feet	_____	3 isn't	_____
4 to	_____	4 farming	_____	4 them	_____	4 beautiful	_____
5 and	_____	5 bus	_____	5 food	_____	5 waiting	_____
6 it	_____	6 now	_____	6 tell	_____	6 head	_____
7 helps	_____	7 read	_____	7 her	_____	7 cowboy	_____
8 stop	_____	8 children	_____	8 please	_____	8 high	_____
9 funny	_____	9 went	_____	9 peanut	_____	9 people	_____
10 can	_____	10 then	_____	10 cannot	_____	10 mice	_____
11 big	_____	11 black	_____	11 eight	_____	11 corn	_____
12 said	_____	12 barn	_____	12 trucks	_____	12 everyone	_____
13 green	_____	13 trees	_____	13 garden	_____	13 strong	_____
14 look	_____	14 brown	_____	14 drop	_____	14 I'm	_____
15 play	_____	15 good	_____	15 stopping	_____	15 room	_____
16 see	_____	16 into	_____	16 frog	_____	16 blows	_____
17 there	_____	17 she	_____	17 street	_____	17 gray	_____
18 little	_____	18 something	_____	18 fireman	_____	18 that's	_____
19 is	_____	19 what	_____	19 birthday	_____	19 throw	_____
20 work	_____	20 saw	_____	20 let's	_____	20 own	_____

Graded Word List

3		4		5		6	
1 hour	_____	1 spoon	_____	1 whether	_____	1 sentinel	_____
2 senseless	_____	2 dozen	_____	2 hymn	_____	2 nostrils	_____
3 turkeys	_____	3 trail	_____	3 sharpness	_____	3 marsh	_____
4 anything	_____	4 machine	_____	4 amount	_____	4 sensitive	_____
5 chief	_____	5 bound	_____	5 shrill	_____	5 calmly	_____
6 foolish	_____	6 exercise	_____	6 freedom	_____	6 tangle	_____
7 enough	_____	7 disturbed	_____	7 loudly	_____	7 wreath	_____
8 either	_____	8 force	_____	8 scientists	_____	8 teamwork	_____
9 chased	_____	9 weather	_____	9 musical	_____	9 billows	_____
10 robe	_____	10 rooster	_____	10 considerable	_____	10 knights	_____
11 crowd	_____	11 mountains	_____	11 examined	_____	11 instinct	_____
12 crawl	_____	12 island	_____	12 scarf	_____	12 liberty	_____
13 unhappy	_____	13 hook	_____	13 muffled	_____	13 pounce	_____
14 clothes	_____	14 guides	_____	14 pacing	_____	14 rumored	_____
15 hose	_____	15 moan	_____	15 oars	_____	15 strutted	_____
16 pencil	_____	16 settlers	_____	16 delicious	_____	16 dragon	_____
17 meat	_____	17 pitching	_____	17 octave	_____	17 hearth	_____
18 discover	_____	18 prepared	_____	18 terrific	_____	18 shifted	_____
19 picture	_____	19 west	_____	19 salmon	_____	19 customers	_____
20 nail	_____	20 knowledge	_____	20 briskly	_____	20 blonde	_____

Appendix C

Writing Spree

Children are asked to write a list of words for a 10 minute period of time. They may write any words that they think they can spell correctly. This test is given the beginning week of school and monthly throughout the year. Each test is dated. The test is scored by counting the number of words spelled correctly.

From Reading Recovery Program by Marie Clay

Appendix D

Writing Prompts

Prompt for a Writing Sample - Grade 1

Teacher Says:

Today you are going to show me how well you can write.

Some children like to play ball. Some children like to ride bikes or jump rope. What do you like to do?

Write about what you like to do. Spell the words the way they sound.

Now you may begin your writing.

Prompt for a Writing Sample--Grade 2

Teacher Says:

Today you are going to show me how well you can write.

Everybody has a favorite food. Some people like spicy foods such as pizza and spaghetti. Other people like sweet foods such as ice cream or chocolate brownies.

Write a description of your favorite food. Try to tell about it in such a way that the reader can almost see it, smell it, and taste it. If you are not sure how to spell a word, spell it the way it sounds.

Now you may begin your writing.

Appendix E

Scoring Rubrics

Scoring Rubric--Grade 1

Score 3: Student

* responds to prompt.
* writes more than one complete sentence using capitals and punctuation.
* uses spelling (both real and invented /phonetic) that does not inhibit readers understanding.

Score 2: Student

* responds to prompt.
* expresses complete thoughts, although may not use standard sentences.
* attempts to spell words using correct initial and/or ending consonants and demonstrates understanding of word boundaries.

Score 1: Student

* may not respond to prompt.
* expresses self in ways that inhibit reader's understanding.
* does not demonstrate understanding of sound/symbol relationships or of word boundaries.

Score 0: Student

* makes no response.

Scoring Rubric --Grade 2

Score 3: Student

* responds to prompt.
* writes several sentences using capitals and ending punctuation.
* uses spelling (both real and invented/phonetic) that does not inhibit reader's understanding.

Score 2: Student

* responds to prompt.
* expresses complete thoughts although sentences may be fragments or run on.
* uses spelling (both real and invented/phonetic) that, for the most part, does not inhibit the reader's understanding.

Score 1: Student

* may not respond to prompt.
* expresses self in ways that inhibit reader's understanding.
* does not demonstrate understanding of sound/symbol relationships or of word boundaries.

Score 0: Student

* makes no response.

Appendix F

Parent List for Home Reading

Materials:

1. Have at least 25 children's books available.

2. Subscribe to a children's magazine.

3. Place some of your child's and some of your own books, magazines, and newspapers in various rooms throughout your home to encourage spontaneous reading in spare moments.

4. Provide space in children's room to store books.

5. Provide as many of the following items as you can to encourage children to tell or create their own stories: puppets, records, tapes of stories, tape recorders.

6. Provide materials with which children can write, illustrate and make their own books: writing paper, colored construction paper, pencils, crayons, felt-tip pens, scissors, paste, and stapler.

Activities:

1. Read to your child daily and let your child read to you.

2. Visit the library once every two weeks to borrow books.

3. Visit a bookstore every two weeks and purchase a paperback.

4. Tell stories to each other.

5. Take turns talking about books and newspaper or magazine articles that members of the family have read.

6. As a family, read silently together, gathered around the kitchen table, the fireplace, or some other comfortable spot. Use the same spot always so it is associated with reading.

7. Read poetry and recite poetry together.

8. Read books related to current television shows or movies.

9. Create a photostory with your children. Select a favorite story that has a simple plot. Have your child act out parts of the book and take slides, movies, or snapshots. Place the snapshots in an album or show the slides or movie while someone reads the story.

10. Prepare food related to books. For example, gingerbread cookies after reading **The Gingerbread Boy** (Holdsworth 1968).

Fostering Positive Attitudes:

1. Provide a model for your child by reading on your own.

2. Reward your child's literary activity with praise and encouragement.

3. Answer your children's questions about books and other materials they have read.

4. Limit the time allowed for viewing TV each day. Encourage selective viewing.

5. Do not censor what your children choose to read. Guide them, but trust their own selections, since it is voluntary reading that you are trying to promote.

Appendix G

Lesson Plan Week One

Lesson Names

Hook: Read orally Chrysanthemum by Kevin Henkes

Materials: 6" x 18" white construction paper
writing paper
markers and crayons
pencil
12" x 18" manila paper (with picture frame drawn on it)

Procedure One: Acrostic name poem
Discuss the story about Chrysanthemum. Brainstorm names for people. Discuss where their names come from, what they mean, who named them, etc. Children then write their name vertically on writing paper. They work on their first draft (sloppy copy). Teacher and child conference to edit and revise the first draft. Children make their final copy. Children decorate the paper and share with classmates. The final copy is put on display.

Procedure Two: Name Frame
Students will draw a self-portrait. In the picture frame surrounding the self-portrait, the students will write about themselves using words, phrases, etc. that have been brainstormed on the board, or any other words that they choose. Students share with classmates and display their work.

Follow-up: Read Rumplestiltskin.
Make name graph.
List names of famous people with same name.

Appendix H

Lesson Plan Week Two

Lesson: Classmate Interview

Hook: Teacher models interview techniques

Materials: graphic organizer
pencils

Procedure: Class discussion on what makes a good interview. Explain the graphic organizer. Draw names to get a partner. Each pair then completes the graphic organizer. Second graders will use their graphic organizer to write a narrative about their interviews. Time will be given to rehearse their oral presentation with their partner and then with a group.

Follow-up: interview a family member.

Appendix I

Lesson Plan Three

Lesson: ABC book using alliteration

Hook: Read orally several ABC books such as Q is for Duck by Mary Elting and Michael Folsom, Eating the Alphabet by Lois Ehlert, Z was Zapped by Chris Van Allsburg, A is for Alice by Bayer.

Materials: paper
pencils
markers
crayons

Procedure: Introduce alliteration. Create several sentences with the class using alliteration. Student pairs choose letters and make a list of animals whose names start with the letter. Students will write alliterative sentences. They will then conference with the teacher. The students will write a final copy and illustrate their sentences. They will share their work with the class and make a class book.

Follow up: Try using alliteration in stories students write.
Write other ABC books using topics other than animals.

Appendix J

Lesson Plan Week Four

Lesson: Haiku form of poetry

Hook: Show pictures of fall scenes and discuss them. Read several examples of haikus to the class.

Materials: paper
pencil
crayons
4" X 6" sheets of white ditto paper

Procedure: Introduce the concept of haiku poetry - the seventeen syllable format. Write a class haiku. The children will write several haikus individually. The teacher needs to allow lots of time for this writing activity. Coming up with words with certain numbers of syllables takes time. The children should be encouraged to write at least three. Then they may choose the one that they like the best. Teacher conferences with the children to see that the proper form has been used and understood. Final copy is written, illustrated, shared with class, and then displayed on a bulletin board.

Follow up: Write haikus for other seasons of the year.

Appendix K

Lesson Plan Week Five

Lesson: Historical fiction writing with Johnny Appleseed

Hook: Twenty questions - Guess what is in the bag? (an apple)

Materials: apple
Johnny Appleseed by Steven Kellogg and The Story of Johnny Appleseed by Aliki
chart paper
crayons or markers
writing paper
pencils
paper bag

Procedure: Teacher will read and discuss the two books on Johnny Appleseed. On large Chart paper the teacher will draw a T chart and use that to compare and contrast the two stories. The students will then write their own versions of Johnny Appleseed. The children will illustrate and share their stories and then they will be displayed.

Follow up: Finish the sentence "An apple a day...."
An apple matrix using looks, smells, feels, tastes, and sounds.
apple printing.

Appendix L

Lesson Plan Week Six

Lesson: Christopher Columbus Definition Poetry

Hook: KWL Chart on Christopher Columbus

Materials: KWL Chart
books on Christopher Columbus
filmstrip on Christopher Columbus
writing paper
paper for illustrating poems
material to bind book

Procedure: During the week preceding Columbus Day, teacher will display many books about Christopher Columbus. The class will do a KWL chart on Christopher Columbus. Teacher will record what the class knows about Christopher Columbus, and what they want to know. The **L** column will remain empty and will be filled in as the lesson proceeds.
The teacher will read several books about Christopher Columbus and the class will help to fill in the KWL chart with the facts they learn.
The teacher will show a filmstrip on Christopher Columbus to help students learn more facts. They will add more information to the KWL chart and read the chart together. They can compare and contrast facts about Christopher Columbus from the written materials and the filmstrip.
After reviewing the KWL chart, the students will write a Definition poem answering the question "Who was Christopher Columbus?" They will answer the questions by listing some of the things they have learned about Christopher Columbus following the Definition poem format. The final sentence of their poem will be "That's who Christopher Columbus was!" After conferencing with their study buddy and then the teacher, time will be given to share their Definition poem with the class. The students will illustrate their poem and the poems will be bound in a class book which will be shared with other first or second grade classes.

Follow up: Write a story pretending that you are Christopher Columbus and are keeping a ship's log of your voyage.
Study a globe and compare it to a flat map. Chart the path that Christopher Columbus sailed.
Do a sink and float lesson for science.

Appendix M

Lesson Plan Week Seven

Lesson : Fire Safety Poster

Hook: October is National Fire Safety month. Practice fire drill.

Materials: Fire Fire by Gail Gibbons
Fire Fighters by Robert Maass
poster board
markers or crayons
3" x 5" index cards

Procedure: Discuss and list fire prevention methods. Discuss and list fire safety rules. Have students write out a card with their name, address, parents' names, and phone numbers to keep by their phone. Have a child make up a safety slogan, and write and illustrate it on poster board. Share with the class and display in the hallway for others to see.

Follow up: Have a firefighter visit the classroom.
Visit a fire station.
Write a thank-you letter to a fireman.

Appendix N

Lesson Plan Week Eight

Lesson: Recipe for Witch's Stew

Hook: Show a picture of a witch stirring something in a bubbling cauldron.

Materials: Recipe books
Picture of a witch stirring her cauldron
large recipe or index cards

Procedure: Bring in several recipe books. Look up a recipe for stew. Write this recipe on board. Discuss ingredients and methods of measuring when using a recipe. Talk about the ingredients in the stew recipe. Show them the picture of the witch and brainstorm some of the things a witch might put in her stew. Have each student write their own recipe for Witch's Stew. Encourage them to make the recipe as "weird" as possible. After reading their recipe to a partner and conferencing with the teacher, they are ready to copy their recipe onto a recipe card. The recipes will be shared with the class and then will be mounted on a large cauldron that is part of a bulletin board display.

Follow up: Bring in your favorite recipe and your mom and dad's favorite recipe. Make a class recipe book for a Christmas gift for the parents. Using a crock-pot, follow a recipe, and make a class stew. Assign each student to bring in one ingredient. After tasting the stew, ask each student to write four words which describe the stew. Share the words with the class.

Appendix O

Lesson Plan Week Nine

Lesson: Using descriptive words to help write a Halloween story.

Hook: Read several stories with Halloween themes such as The Mystery of the Flying Orange Pumpkin by Steven Kellog, Scary, Scary Holloween by Eve Bunting, or The Biggest Pumpkin Ever by Steven Kroll.

Materials: paper
pencil
crayons or markers
white construction paper

Procedure: After reading a few stories with the Halloween theme, lead a discussion about some of the Halloween costumes that are the children's favorites. Discuss what makes Halloween so spooky and scary to them. Elicit lots of responses and list them on the board. Have the children choose a buddy to make up a list of Halloween related words. Allow about fifteen minutes for this. Next create a list on chart paper of the words that they come up with. The children now should be able to use some ideas and words that they have just worked on and begin their writings. After about fifteen minutes, ask if anyone would like to share the beginning of their story with the class. Several will want to do this. Conference at different intervals with the children to see how they are coming along. When finished, a final draft can be put together or they may just go ahead and do an illustration to go along with their story.

Follow up: Halloween haikus
Diamonte poems

Appendix P

Lesson Plan Week Ten

Lesson: Writing Friendly Letters

Hook: Bring in an envelope addressed to the teacher. Guess who it might be from and what it might say.

Materials: Personal letter addressed to teacher.
writing paper
address of grandparent
stamp

Procedure: Read the teacher's letter and ask if anyone has ever received their own letter. Discuss some of these letters and what they might have said. Explain that these are called Friendly letters. Show the format on the board and discuss the importance of each part of the letter. Ask students to bring in an envelope, stamp, and an address of someone they can write to, preferably a great-grandparent. The teacher should send home a note to parents explaining that we will be writing letters to grandparents and asking them about what they were like in first or second grade. They will be asked to send the letters directly to school in care of the child. The children will write their letter using a form letter for the beginning of the letter, explaining our purpose, then will be encouraged to write a personal paragraph to their letter. The teacher will conference with the child about correct letter form and neatness. When the letter is finished, they may share with the class or keep the letter personal. They will address the envelope, adhere the stamp, and walk with the teacher (if possible) to a neighborhood mailbox to mail everyone's letters. When the letters are received, the teacher will read them to the class, and the class will guess who the letter is written to. The class will keep a list of things that they are learning about long ago from the letters. The letters will then be displayed for all to enjoy, and then sent home. This activity is a very positive way to introduce the importance of sending and receiving letters. The grandparents enjoy being asked to remember when they were six or seven. The students are very interested because they have a connection to the past. A follow-up letter later in the year is a good extension to this activity.

Follow-up : Have volunteers type the letters received and make a book for each child. The students can also draw a portrait of their grandparent to be a part of the book. Copies can be made so everyone has a book or just a class book can be made. Throughout the year they enjoy choosing this class book to read.

Appendix Q

Lesson Plan Week Eleven

Lesson: Sequential Order

Hook: Read Turkey's Gift to the People by Ani Ruck. Pass out seed packets.

Materials: Turkey's Gift to the People
individual seed packets for each pair of students (visual aid)
paper
pencil
sequential order graphic organizer

Procedure: The children will write a story that will tell us how to catch a turkey. Before you begin, discuss sequential order. List some sentences on the blackboard that are not in sequential order. This could be a simple recipe for making a sandwich; something to give them a point of reference. With their cooperative buddy, they write down how to catch a turkey on their graphic organizer form. They share their writing with the class. The class then decides if they could really catch a turkey following those steps. They soon see the importance of sequential order.

Follow-up: Read and follow directions on how to make a paper bag stuffed turkey art project.

Appendix R

Lesson Plan Week Twelve

Lesson: Compare and contrast Pilgrim boys and girls.

Hook: Read Sarah Morton's Day by Kate Waters and Samuel Eaton's Day by Kate Waters.

Materials: Venn diagram
markers or crayons
pencil
writing paper
Sarah Morton's Day
Samuel Eaton's Day

Procedures: Discuss the daily activities of Sarah and Samuel. Describe Pilgrims, class will fill in Venn diagram together, comparing and contrasting Pilgrim boys to girls. Students will write what life would be like for them as a Pilgrim boy or girl. Share with the class.

Follow-up: Have children compare and contrast today's lifestyle to that of the Pilgrims
Read and discuss How Many Days to America by Eve Bunting.

Appendix S

Lesson Plan Week Thirteen

Lesson: Thanksgiving Menu

Hook: Read several Thanksgiving stories or bring in a pumpkin pie to share with the class.

Materials: Venn diagram
Thanksgiving books
pumpkin pie
paper
pencils

Procedure: Brainstorm a list of as many foods as the children can list that would have been served at the first Thanksgiving. Using a graphic organizer, Venn diagram, compare and contrast the Thanksgiving menus for the first Thanksgiving dinner and a dinner we have today. After comparing these two menus, the student will create a third menu using only their favorite foods. Write a story of how their Thanksgiving today is different from that first Thanksgiving.

Follow up: Read the menus and decide if they have the basic food groups.
Take a survey of ten people to find out their favorite traditional Thanksgiving food.

Appendix T

SILVAROLI CLASSROOM READING INVENTORY
FIRST GRADE
DECEMBER, 1995

STUDENT	August	December	STUDENT	August	December
1	PP	1	26	NR	P
2	NR	P	27	NR	1
3	NR	PP	28	P	2
4	NR	P	29	NR	NR
5	NR	P	30	PP	1
6	1	3	31	NR	P
7	P	1	32	NR	PP
8	NR	NR	33	NR	1
9	6	6	34	PP	1
10	1	3	35	NR	PP
11	NR	P	36	PP	2
12	PP	P	37	NR	2
13	NR	PP	38	NR	P
14	P	2	39	NR	1
15	4	6	40		
16	1	3	41		
17	4	6	42		
18	P	3	43		
19	NR	P	44		
20	P	2	45		
21	NR	PP	46		
22	2	4	47		
23	NR	PP	48		
24	PP	1	49		
25	2	4	50		

Appendix U

SILVAROLI CLASSROOM READING INVENTORY
SECOND GRADE
DECEMBER, 1995

STUDENT	August	December	STUDENT	August	December
1	1	3	26	PP	P
2	3	4	27	2	2
3	NR	PP	28	2	3
4	1	3	29	NR	PP
5	2	4	30	1	2
6	1	3	31	PP	P
7	3	4	32	PP	1
8	PP	PP	33	6	6
9	PP	1	34	P	1
10	6	6	35	P	2
11	2	3	36	4	6
12	PP	P	37	2	2
13	PP	PP	38	2	4
14	1	2	39	3	4
15	6	6	40	PP	1
16	2	3	41	PP	1
17	3	4	42	NR	PP
18	3	4	43	PP	PP
19	4	5	44	2	3
20	1	2	45	1	2
21	5	6	46	2	2
22	6	6	47		
23	P	P	48		
24	1	2	49		
25	P	2	50		

Appendix V

FIRST GRADE WRITING SPREE

DECEMBER, 1995

STUDENT	August	December	STUDENT	August	December
1	16	59	26	4	25
2	2	32	27	12	31
3	14	32	28	9	19
4	8	61	29	9	26
5	3	30	30	5	21
6	13	47	31	11	29
7	29	76	32	8	34
8	2	18	33	11	30
9	27	108	34	13	34
10	8	49	35	15	49
11	8	35	36	11	29
12	14	39	37	4	18
13	7	33	38	3	30
14	9	63	39	1	18
15	18	69	40		
16	30	104	41		
17	40	116	42		
18	5	44	43		
19	10	34	44		
20	4	40	45		
21	16	53	46		
22	4	16	47		
23	14	56	48		
24	40	75	49		
25	6	29	50		

Appendix W

SECOND GRADE WRITING SPREE

DECEMBER, 1995

STUDENT	August	December	STUDENT	August	December
1	30	65	26	5	29
2	31	66	27	31	50
3	8	41	28	20	40
4	23	48	29	12	35
5	34	58	30	17	43
6	25	55	31	12	32
7	23	42	32	26	54
8	24	45	33	23	45
9	15	50	34	12	48
10	63	84	35	15	46
11	55	86	36	20	73
12	12	45	37	10	9
13	12	30	38	16	43
14	22	49	39	18	41
15	32	76	40	23	37
16	37	61	41	6	27
17	34	71	42	17	40
18	48	72	43	7	14
19	35	77	44	11	42
20	27	35	45	30	53
21	73	140	46	25	66
22	44	36.	47		
23	16	34	48		
24	17	51	49		
25	24	53	50		

Appendix X

FIRST GRADE WRITING PROMPT
DECEMBER, 1995

STUDENT	August	December	STUDENT	August	December
1	3	3	26	1	2
2	1	3	27	1	3
3	2	3	28	2	3
4	2	2	29	2	3
5	2	2	30	1	3
6	2	3	31	1	2
7	1	3	32	1	3
8	3	3	33	1	2
9	2	3	34	1	2
10	1	2	35	2	3
11	3	3	36	1	3
12	3	3	37	1	1
13	2	3	38	2	3
14	3	3	39	2	3
15	1	3	40		
16	2	3	41		
17	0	2	42		
18	2	3	43		
19	2	3	44		
20	2	2	45		
21	2	2	46		
22	2	3	47		
23	1	1	48		
24	2	2	49		
25	1	3	50		

Appendix Y

SECOND GRADE WRITING PROMPT
DECEMBER, 1995

STUDENT	August	December	STUDENT	August	December
1	2	3	26	1	3
2	3	3	27	1	2
3	1	2	28	1	2
4	2	3	29	1	1
5	2	3	30	2	2
6	1	3	31	1	1
7	2	3	32	1	2
8	1	2	33	2	2
9	2	3	34	1	1
10	3	3	35	1	2
11	2	3	36	1	3
12	1	1	37	2	2
13	1	1	38	3	3
14	2	3	39	1	2
15	3	3	40	2	2
16	2	3	41	1	1
17	2	3	42	1	2
18	1	3	43	1	1
19	2	3	44	2	1
20	1	2	45	2	2
21	3	3	46	1	2
22	2	3	47		
23	1	1	48		
24	1	3	49		
25	1	2	50		